

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Claims 1-7 are canceled.

8. (Currently Amended) A method for the continuous production of polyamide, starting with a material comprised of a salt of hexamethylenediamine with adipic acid (AH salt) and water which together form a prepolymer, the method comprising:

a first stage wherein above atmospheric pressure is applied, in a first reactor having a first gas space, at temperatures between 180°C and 280°C to the starting material, ~~producing evaporated water containing reaction components~~; and, after passing the starting material through the first stage, feeding the prepolymer obtained due to said passage to at least one further stage comprising a second reactor having a second gas space and ~~there~~ removing or expelling the evaporated water from said second gas space; ~~wherein the improvement comprising~~ connecting said first gas space with pressure control to said second gas space, such that water evaporated in the first stage, with reaction components contained therein, is passed into the at least one further stage, said water being expelled only in the at least one further stage.

9. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 8, wherein in said at least one further stage, the method further comprising passing the expelled water via a reflux column.

10. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 8, wherein an amount of AH-salt of up to 30% or from 80 to 100% is used.

11. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 9, further comprising expelling the water in the reflux column at the at least one further stage at a temperature of less than 120°C measured at the upper end of the reflux column, separating off caprolactam and diamine fractions from the water in the reflux column and recycling said fractions to the at least one further stage of the method.

12. (Currently Amended) A method for the continuous production of copolyamide, starting with a material comprised of a salt of hexamethylenediamine with adipic acid (AH salt), of water and

of lactam, which form a prepolymer, the method comprising:

a first stage wherein above atmospheric pressure is applied, in a first reactor having a first gas space at temperatures between 180°C and 280°C to the starting material, ~~preducing~~ evaporated water containing reaction components and after passing the starting material through the first stage, and feeding the prepolymer obtained due to said passage to at least one further stage comprising a second reactor having a second gas space and there removing or expelling the evaporated water from said second gas space; ~~wherein~~ the improvement comprising connecting said first gas space with pressure control to said second gas space, such that the water evaporated in the first stage, with the reaction components contained therein, is passed into the at least one further stage, water being expelled only in the at least one further stage.

13. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 12, wherein in the at least one further stage waste product in vapor form is passed from the evaporated water via a reflux column.

14. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 12, wherein the starting material has a concentration of AH-salt of no more than 30%.

15. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~13~~ 12, wherein the starting material has a concentration of AH-salt of from 80 to 100.

16. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 12, further comprising expelling the water in a reflux column at a temperature of less than 102°C measured at the upper end of the reflux column, separating off caprolactam and diamine fractions in the reflux column and recycling the fractions to the at least one further stage of the method.

17. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 12, wherein the water is expelled by inert gas.